Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

1400 So. 19th
Bozeman, MT 59718

September 13, 2010

Dear Interested Citizen:

Enclosed you will find for your review the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for a Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposal to acquire a 151-acre Wildlife Management Area in the Robert E. Lee Range northwest of Canyon Creek in Lewis and Clark County. The purpose of this proposal is to secure additional fish and wildlife habitat and to enhance compatible recreational opportunities and access for the public.

FWP will hold a public hearing in Helena on September 22nd (Wednesday) at 7:00 p.m. in the FWP Commission Room at the FWP Headquarters in Helena to discuss the proposed acquisition and to take public comment.

The EA may also be obtained by mail from the FWP Helena Area Resource Office in Helena and the Regional Headquarters in Bozeman, by phoning (406) 495-3260, or on the FWP web site http://fwp.mt.gov ("Recent Public Notices," beginning September 13th, 2010).

Comments should be directed by mail to Canyon Creek WMA Addition Project, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Helena Area Resource Office, PO Box 200701, Helena, MT 59620 or by email to jsika@mt.gov. Comments must be received by FWP no later than 5 p.m. on Tuesday, September 28th, 2010.

As part of the decision making process under MEPA, I expect to issue the Decision Notice for this EA very soon after the end of the comment period. The Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission has the final decision-making authority for FWP land acquisition proposals, and the Commission will be asked to render its decision on this proposal during its October 7th, 2010 meeting. Approval will also be necessary from the Montana Board of Land Commissioners.

Sincerely,

Pat Flowers
Region 3 Supervisor

Draft
Environmental Assessment

PROPOSED LAND ACQUISITION – R-3

Canyon Creek Wildlife Management Area Addition

September 2010

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Draft Environmental Assessment
MEPA, NEPA, MCA 23-1-110 CHECKLIST

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of proposed state action:

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) proposes to acquire via fee title 151.09 acres from the Ball Family in the Robert E. Lee Range northwest of Canyon Creek, Montana. This property will be an addition to the existing Canyon Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA).

2. Agency authority for the proposed action:

FWP has the authority to purchase lands that are suitable for game, bird, fish or fur-bearing animal restoration, propagation or protection; for public hunting, fishing, or trapping areas; and for state parks and outdoor recreation per Montana state statute 87-1-209.

Funding for the proposed acquisition will come from the Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Trust (MFWCT). The maintenance account and other costs/fees associated with acquisition will be provided by FWP with general hunting license and Habitat Montana funds, respectively. The property is located within the focus area of the MFWCT, which applies funds gained from the sale of Canyon Ferry cabin-site leases to land conservation, with an emphasis on projects in the upper Missouri River drainage.

Per state law, 87-1-201(9) MCA, FWP is required to implement programs that address fire mitigation, pine beetle infestation, and wildlife habitat enhancement giving priority to forested lands in excess of 50 contiguous acres in any state park, fishing access site, or wildlife management area under the department's jurisdiction. FWP will develop and implement forest management plans for this property to meet the intent of this statute.

FWP is also required to deposit 20% of the purchase price, capped at $300,000/acquisition, for properties it acquires (87-1-209 and 23-1-127 (2) MCA). Such an account would be used for weed maintenance, fence installation or repair of existing fences, garbage removal, implementation of safety and health measures required by law to protect the public, erosion control, streambank stabilization, erection of barriers to preserve riparian vegetation and habitat, and planting of native trees, grasses, and shrubs for habitat stabilization. Such maintenance activities should be consistent with the good neighbor policy.

Additionally, Montana state statute 23-2-102 provides authority for the proposed purchase. "Montana is uniquely endowed with scenic landscapes and areas rich in recreational value. This outdoor heritage enriches the lives of citizens, attracts new residents and businesses to the state, and is of major significance to the expanding tourist industry. It is the purpose of this part to give authority to the Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks to plan and develop outdoor recreational resources in the state, which authority shall permit receiving and expending funds including federal grants for this purpose."

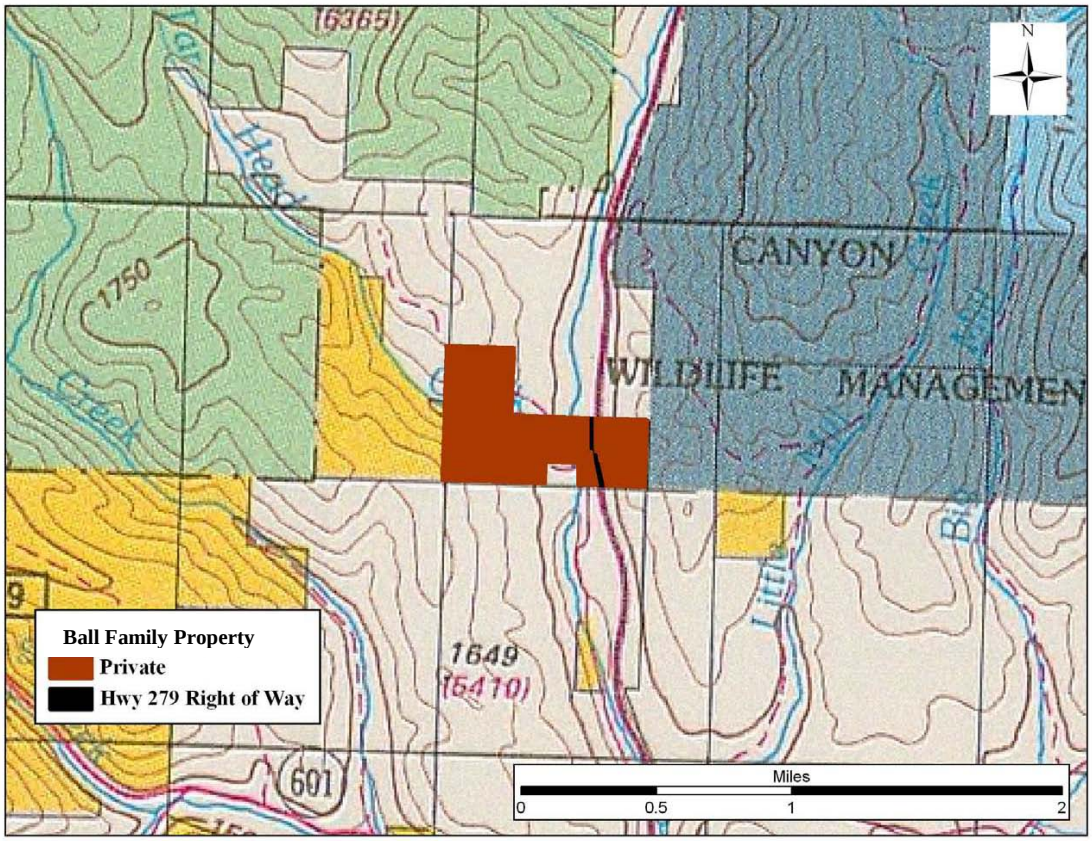
3. Name, address and phone number of project sponsor (if other than the agency):
Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Trust
P.O. Box1993
Helena, MT 59624

4. Anticipated Schedule:
Public Comment Period: September 13th – September 28th, 2010
Submission to FWP Commission for Approval: October 2010
Submission to the Land Board for Approval: October 2010

5. Location affected by proposed action
The property is located about 20 miles northwest of Helena, Montana near the town of Canyon Creek along Hwy 279. Portions of the property are both east and west of the highway, in hunting districts 339 and 343 respectively, with the far eastern property boundary adjoining the Canyon Creek WMA. The property is depicted in brown in Figure 1 below.

Township 13 North Range 6 West
Section 03 Tract one, tract two, tract three, and tract four as further described by COS# 317433

Figure 1. Location of the Ball Family property.



6. Project size -- estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:

Total acres: 151.09

	Acres		Acres
(a) Developed:		(d) Floodplain	0
Residential	0		
Industrial	0	(e) Productive:	
(existing shop area)		Irrigated cropland	0
(b) Open Space/	40.16	Dry cropland	0
Woodlands/Recreation		Forestry	85.93
(c) Wetlands/Riparian	25	Rangeland	0
Areas		Other	0

8. Permits, Funding and Jurisdiction.

(a) Permits: A Montana Department of Transportation Approach Permit will be necessary if a new approach to the property is pursued after acquisition.

(b) Funding:

Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Trust	$635,000

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities: None.

9. Narrative summary of the proposed action:

Through the MFWCT, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) proposes to acquire via fee title 151.09 acres from the Ball Family in the Robert E. Lee Range northwest of Canyon Creek, Montana. This property will be an addition to the existing Canyon Creek WMA.

Property ownership adjunct to this parcel includes FWP, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and private lands. It adjoins the Canyon Creek WMA to the east for ~¼ mi and adjoins BLM land to the west for ~¼ mi, both of which adjoin U.S. Forest Service lands (USFS). Some areas of the nearby Helena National Forest are inventoried as roadless. The project area is all private land. The targeted property was used historically by the Ball Family for its recreational opportunities. There is an irrigation canal that traverses the property, and there is an underground spring on the property east of the highway. There are no water rights currently filed appurtenant to the property, therefore no water rights will transfer with acquisition. All mineral rights will be transferred with acquisition. The property is partially fenced. There is a 6-acre parcel that is privately owned and is not fenced within the targeted property. The targeted property extends east and west of Hwy 279, in hunting districts 339 and 343, respectively.

The existing Canyon Creek WMA encompasses 2210 acres, which provide yearlong habitat for elk, upland game birds, small mammals, and birds and seasonal habitat for deer, bear, forest carnivores, raptors, and endemic and neo-tropical migrant birds. Little Mill Creek, Big Mill Creek, and Sawmill Gulch flow through the WMA and contain brook trout. These streams have been considered for westslope cutthroat trout restoration.

Public recreation opportunities include hunting, wildlife viewing, hiking, horseback riding, and picnicking. Public access to adjacent public lands (USFS and Department of Natural Resources and Conservation [DNRC]) is also provided with this WMA. The existing WMA is within hunting district 339.

The vegetation of the targeted 151 acres is dominated by coniferous forest and upland grassland with some riparian areas. The timber was logged at least as recently as the 1980s. At the present time, Douglas fir and ponderosa pine are the predominant conifer species present. There are already some ponderosa pine snags that are substantial in both diameter and height, and some ponderosa pine appear to be succumbing to mountain pine beetle infestation. The Douglas fir appears to be healthy at the present time, but some of the Douglas fir in the Flesher Pass area has died out, likely due to infestation of spruce budworm. Tar Head Creek flows through the property to its confluence with Canyon Creek, which also flows through the property. This property provides habitat similar to the existing WMA. Although a thorough reconnaissance of the cover types has not been completed, it is likely that they are similar to the existing WMA.

On the existing WMA:

- Grasslands are dominated by rough fescue/Idaho fescue (*Festuca scabrella/Festuca idahoensis*) and Idaho fescue/bluebunch wheatgrass (*Festuca idahoensis*/*Agropyron spicatum*) with mountain big sagebrush (*Artemesia tridentata vaseyana*) interspersed in some areas.
- The most common forest cover type is Douglas-fir/rough fescue (*Pseudotsuga menziesii/Festuca scabrella*). This cover type occupies the majority of the WMA. Small areas of Douglas-fir/Idaho fescue (*Pseudotsuga menzesia/Festuca idahoensis*), Douglas-fir/elk sedge (*Pseudotsuga menziesii/Carex spp.*) and Douglas-fir/pinegrass (*Pseudotsuga menziesii/Calamagrostis rubescens*) also occur within the WMA.
- Riparian vegetation communities occur along the three creek drainages and are described by cover type below. Riparian is defined as sites that have permanent water tables at or near the surface for a significant period in the growing season. The dominant riparian cover type is the Douglas-fir/red-osier dogwood (*Pseudotsuga menziesii /Cornus canadensis*) type. This type is dominated by scattered Douglas fir, black cottonwood (*Populus trichocarpa*) and aspen (*P. tremuloides*) with an understory that includes red-osier dogwood, bebbs willow (*Salix bebbiana*), sandbar willow (*S. interior*), Douglas hawthorn (*Crataegus douglasii*), woodrose (*Rosa woodsii*), snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*), water birch (*Betula occidentalis*) and alder (*Alnus spp.*). A few sites may be classified marginally as the Englemann spruce/red-osier dogwood (*Picea engelmanni*) cover type. A few small sites lack conifer trees and could be classified as willow types. Most riparian areas in these units show signs of past livestock use that has resulted in reduced coverage of riparian species, browse lines on shrubs, and invasion by non-native plants especially Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*), common tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*), houndstongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*), and diffuse and spotted knapweed (*Centaurea diffusa, C. maculosa*).

The benefits of the additional property not only include increasing the amount of existing, contiguous protected wildlife habitat and further protection of a stream corridor containing native westslope cutthroat trout but also include increasing public access to public lands

in a strategic location. The following are details of the resource values FWP wants to protect:

- Although limited in size, acquisition of this property will secure additional habitat and movement connectivity for wildlife across Hwy 279 between the WMA and nearby public lands (USFS, BLM, DNRC). Species of Concern (SOC) verified to occur in this vicinity include wolverine (*Gulo gulo*), Canada lynx *(Lynx Canadensis)*, grizzly bear *(Ursus arctos)*, pileated woodpecker *(Dryocopus pileatus)*, golden eagle *(Aquila chrysaetos)*, and westslope cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki lewisi*). Unverified SOC for this area includes fisher *(Martes pennant)*. No plant SOC were listed in the Natural Heritage Program database for this vicinity. A complete list of those species that are predicted to be present in the vicinity is included in Appendix A. This property is within the Continental Divide wildlife movement corridor, which is a priority area for the conservation of species that exist at low densities, such as Canada lynx, grizzly bear, and wolverine. In that scope, this property is part of a larger landscape effort.

- The proposed acquisition will not only further protect the stream corridor from invasion by non-native fish species but may also expedite FWP's efforts to further enhance and extend the current distribution of westslope cutthroat. Although not currently listed as a "Conservation Population," implementation of habitat improvement projects may be simplified if the lower portion of the stream was located on public lands. Habitat improvements, such as barriers to prevent immigration of non-native rainbow and brook trout, stream bed restoration, or improvements to the riparian corridor, may allow additional treatment to improve the Tar Head cutthroat population and elevate its conservation status.

- Acquisition of this property will secure more direct public access to adjacent public lands in a strategic location for fishing, hunting and other non-motorized recreation. The proposed acquisition will also provide another point of public access to the southwest corner of the existing WMA (see Figure 1). Hunter use is expected to exceed 500 hunter days annually. Angler access will increase, and there will be additional fishing opportunity for brook trout and rainbow trout, both of which occur in Canyon Creek. At present, there is no public access to public lands near the west side of Hwy 279, except at Flesher Pass. Public access to the Tar Head and Trout Creek drainages on the Helena National Forest is from above through the Stemple Pass area. This property will provide more direct public access to the Tar Head and Trout Creek drainages from below. Finally, elk are harvested in the WMA and in the Tar Head and Trout Creek drainages, and acquisition of additional land adjacent to the WMA is expected to further disperse hunters. This property will also allow hiking and wildlife viewing, and it is near the Continental Divide, which is a national scenic trail.

If the acquisition is completed, the additional 151 acres of the Canyon Creek WMA will be managed under the guidance of the *Canyon Creek Wildlife Management Area Management Plan* (2002; see Appendix D). Minimal development of public facilities such as parking areas and interior roads and trails is planned in order to maintain the undeveloped, primitive nature of the area. The following regulations apply:

- Winter wildlife closure: WMA closed to all unauthorized activities from December 1st through May 14th.
- Motor and wheeled vehicles must stay on authorized roads only.

- WMA open to day-use only.
- Weed-seed free feed products are required.
- Commercial use of the WMA is prohibited.

The overall objectives of the project are to:

- Maintain or improve the wildlife and fisheries values that exist on the property.
- Provide recreational opportunity on the property.
- Provide strategic public access to adjoining public lands.
- Enhance ability to achieve population management objectives of wildlife.

10. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives:

Alternative A: No Action – FWP would not acquire the Ball Family Property

Under the No Action Alternative, FWP would not acquire the property from the Ball Family. Eventually, the property would likely be sold to a private entity, and the opportunity for public access in this strategic location would be unlikely to be obtained by FWP through another property in the area.

Alternative B: Proposed Action – For FWP to acquire 151 acres from the Ball Family for addition to the Canyon Creek WMA

Through the MFWCT, FWP proposes to acquire via fee title 151.09 acres in the Robert E. Lee Range both east and west of Hwy 279 northwest of Canyon Creek, Montana. The property includes portions of the Tar Head drainage as well as the confluence of Tar Head and Canyon Creeks.

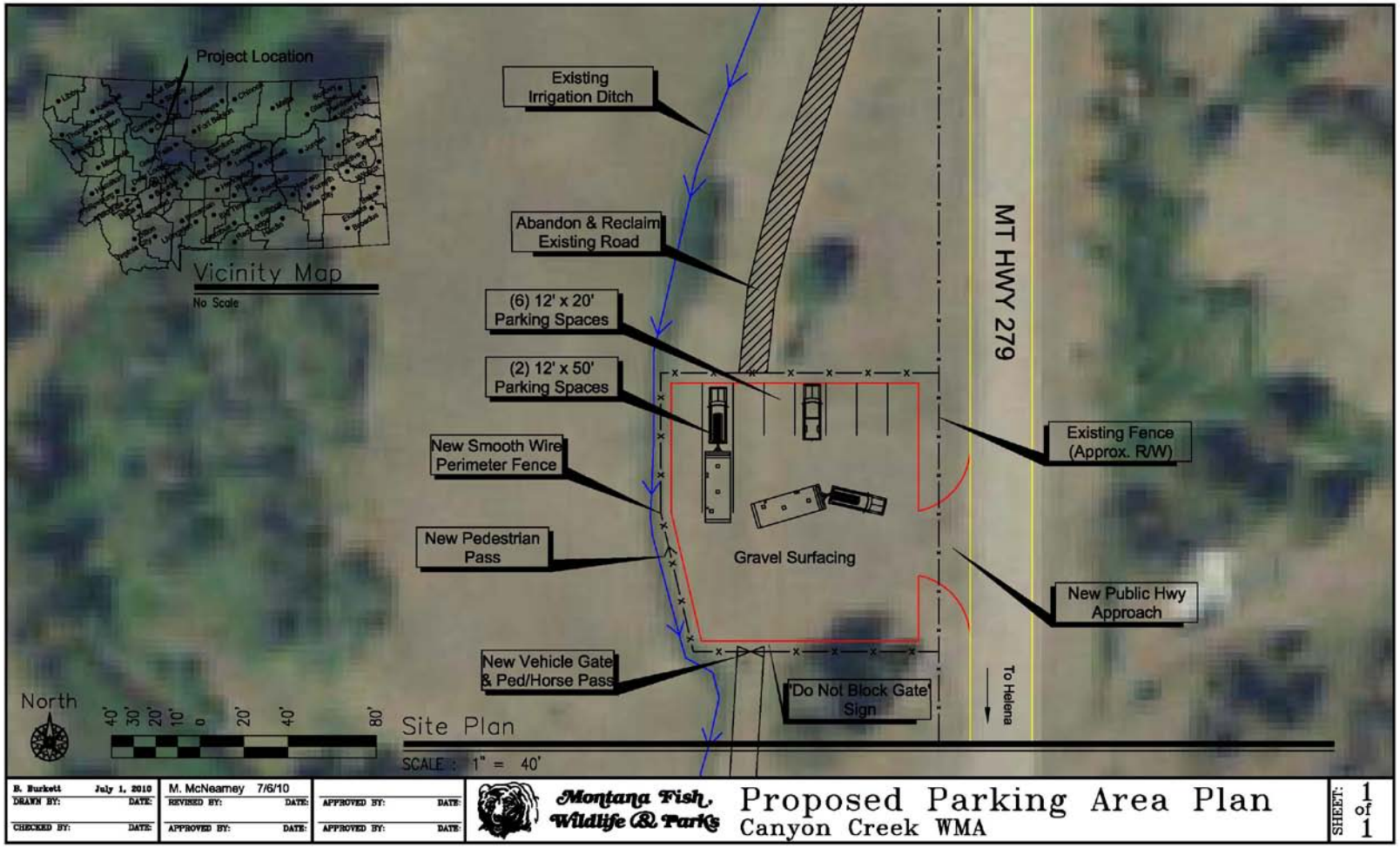
The property will be an addition to the existing Canyon Creek WMA. Therefore, the *Canyon Creek Wildlife Management Area Management Plan* (2002) will be the basis for management of the property (Appendix D).

No developments will be made within the property. Existing infrastructure demolition and removal, debris removal, and boundary and parking fence and barrier erection are anticipated after acquisition to provide resource protection and for public safety. Adjacent to the west side of Hwy 279, FWP plans to establish one graveled, designated parking area that would accommodate up to eight vehicles, including one to two vehicles with horse trailers (Figure 2). FWP plans to install appropriate signage at the new area if the acquisition is completed. FWP will consult with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) prior to any ground disturbing activities.

The expected cost of acquisition is $635,000 plus set aside funds for maintenance. MFWCT funds will be used to purchase the property. The maintenance account will be provided by FWP from general hunting license funds.

For the immediate future, no new FWP staff are planned to be hired to manage the property.

Figure 2. Proposed parking area plan for the Canyon Creek WMA Addition.



PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

The analysis of the physical and human environments discussed on the following pages is limited to Alternative B. The reason for this is that the potential impacts of the No Action alternative are difficult to define, because the final decision regarding the potential sale of the property is left to the discretion of the current owners. If the property is sold to a different buyer, existing wildlife habitat and water resources could be negatively affected if the new property owner intended to subdivide and develop the acres.

Evaluation of the impacts of the Proposed Action including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical and Human Environment.

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. LAND RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. **Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility?		X				
c. **Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				

The proposed action will have no effect on existing soil stability, geologic substructure, or any unique geologic or physical features within the new WMA area. If FWP acquires the property, establishing a parking area will require grading and/or soil movement, and gravel will be placed over the designated lot. FWP will consult with the SHPO prior to any ground disturbing activities. The parking area will accommodate up to eight vehicles with enough space for a vehicle with a trailer to turn around. The parking area will require additional fencing and/or barriers to protect resource values and to reduce the possibility of pioneering roads and driving into the irrigation canal.

2. AIR **Will the proposed action result in:**	**IMPACT ***					
	Unknown	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
a. **Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13 (c).)		X				
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		X				
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. ***For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a.)		X				

The proposed action will have no effect on ambient air quality within the property. Motorized and wheeled vehicles will be required to travel on existing, authorized roads. There is a road easement through the property for access by one adjoining neighbor. Within the new WMA area, public parking will be at the edge of the property adjacent to the west side of the highway, and public use will be restricted to walk-in use only from the parking area.

3. WATER Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. *Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?		X				
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?		X				
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.)		N/A				
m. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a.)		N/A				

The proposed acquisition is not expected to affect the existing quality and quantity of Canyon Creek or Tar Head Creek, because no disturbance of these creeks is planned by FWP. It is unknown if Canyon Creek or Tar Head Creek are part of a floodplain, because floodplain maps are not available for that area. There is an irrigation canal that traverses the property, and it is unknown if it is an active source of water for farmers. It was dry on a June 21 and July 2, 2010 site visit.

4. VEGETATION Will the proposed action result in?	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?		X				
b. Alteration of a plant community?		X				
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?			X		Yes	4.e.
f. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		N/A				
g. Other:		X				

Under FWP management, wildlife and fisheries values will be protected, and where necessary, the productivity of soils, water, and vegetation will be improved while striving for maximum vegetation diversity dependent on soil types. There is no prime or unique farmland on the land. There is an irrigation canal that traverses the property.

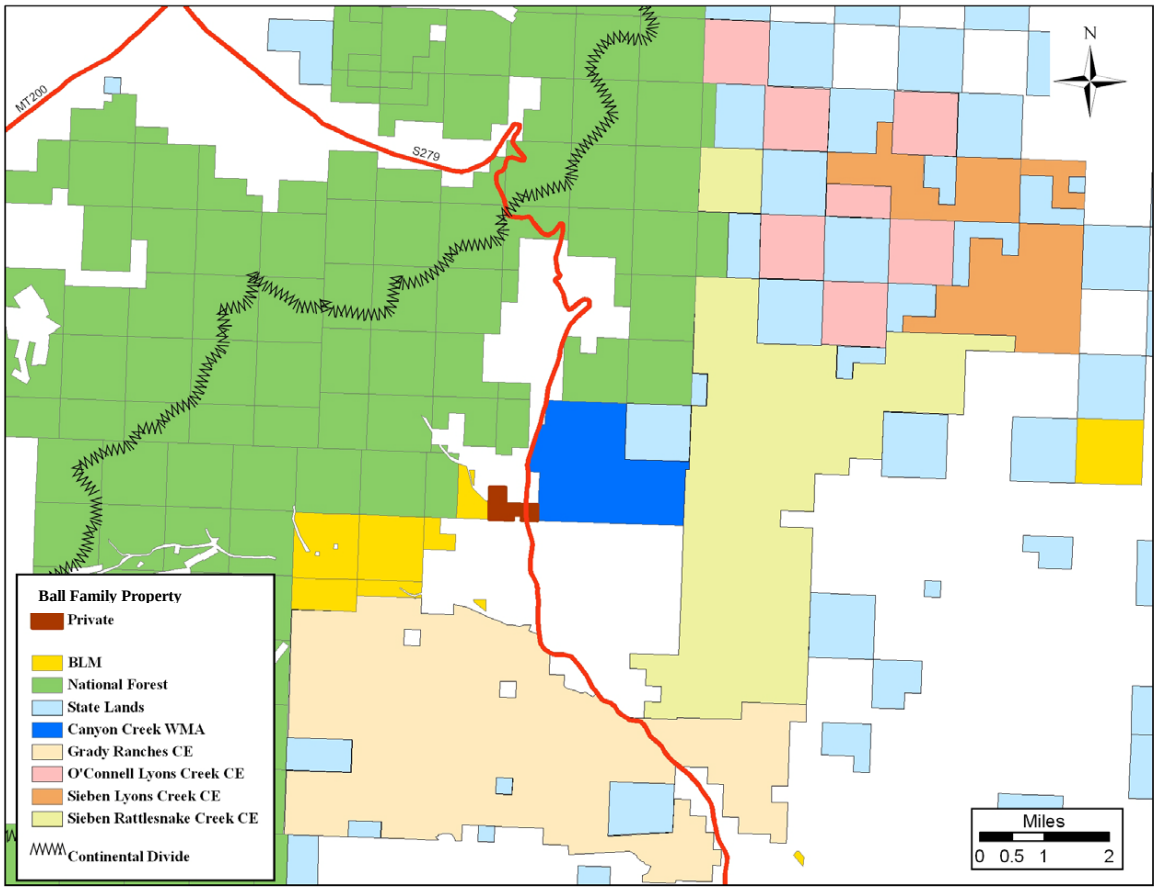
4.e. FWP will document compliance with 7-22-2154, MCA, on weed inspections for land acquisitions. The property will be inspected for noxious weeds by the county weed management district with assistance from the FWP Helena area wildlife biologist. A partial reconnaissance of the property for noxious weeds identified the following along a very old road bed running above yet adjacent to Tar Head Creek west of the highway: houndstongue, Canada thistle, knapweed, and leafy spurge. Knapweed was identified on the approach to the property east of the highway. FWP will implement noxious weed management with guidance from the FWP *Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan* (June 2008) and will utilize properly prescribed chemicals on a prioritized basis. Biological agents, mowing, pulling, and/or other methods will be researched and utilized where chemical control is inappropriate. Limitations on motorized use of the property will be implemented to minimize the introduction and spread of noxious weeds. Weed-seed free feeds will be required. There may be a legal road easement through a portion of the property for one adjoining landowner, and there may be a legal stock driving/trailing easement through the property for another adjoining landowner.

** 5. FISH/WILDLIFE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		X				
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?		X				
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				5.f.
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?			X			5.g.
h. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f.)		N/A				
i. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d.)		N/A				

5.f. Species of Concern (SOC) that are verified in this vicinity include wolverine, Canada lynx, grizzly bear, pileated woodpecker, golden eagle, and westslope cutthroat trout. Unverified SOC for this area include fisher. No plant species were listed in the Natural Heritage Program database for this vicinity. Under FWP management, wildlife and fisheries values, including threatened and endangered species, will be protected, and where necessary, the productivity of soils, water, and vegetation will be improved while striving for maximum vegetation diversity dependent on soil types.

5.g. The property will be open to public access, hunting, fishing, and other non-motorized recreation consistent with a wildlife management area. Public use of nearby public lands (BLM, USFS, and FWP) will also likely increase due to access through this property. Therefore, wildlife may be stressed and dispersed in the immediate area. However, this impact is expected to be minor and consistent with FWP wildlife management. Further, the property is located adjacent to and near a great deal of public lands (BLM, USFS, and FWP) and private lands with FWP conservation easements, which provide additional habitat for wildlife to disperse to (see Figure 3 below).

Figure 3. FWP conservation easements proximate to the Ball Family Property.



B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Increases in existing noise levels?			X			6.a.
b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels?		X				
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				

6.a. Because the property will be open to public access and hunting, there will likely be an increase in the discharge of firearms both on the property and on adjacent public lands during hunting seasons. Therefore, there may be "nuisance noise" during hunting seasons. It is expected that this will be intermittent, and therefore this impact is considered minor.

7. LAND USE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				
b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				

8. RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?			X		Yes	8.a. & c.
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan, or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?			X		Yes	8.a. & c.
d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)		N/A				

8.a. & c. Chemical spraying is part of FWP's weed management plan to limit the infestation of noxious weeds on its properties per the guidance of the FWP *Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan* (June 2008). Weed treatment and storage and mixing of the chemicals will be in accordance with standard operating procedures. Certified professionals will utilize permitted chemicals and apply them in accordance with product labels and as provided for under law.

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?			X		Possibly	9.e.

The proposed action will have no effect on local communities or alter the distribution of population in the area.

9.e. The existing approach to and road on the property on the west side of highway cuts in sharply from the north to the south-southwest. It is unlikely that the Montana Department of Transportation would approve public use of the existing approach. A new approach and parking area for public use for this portion of the WMA is expected to be established. It is likely that the placement of a new approach will reduce potential traffic hazards (see Figure 2 above).

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES **Will the proposed action result in:**	**IMPACT ∗**					
	Unknown	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:		X				
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				10.b.
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source?		X				
e. ∗∗Define projected revenue sources		X				
f. ∗∗Define projected maintenance costs.			X			10.f.

10.b. The 2009 taxes for the property were approximately $950. FWP is required by law to make tax payments to counties equal to the amount that a private landowner would be required to pay per Montana Code 87-1-603. No changes to the tax amount paid to Lewis & Clark County are anticipated.

10.f. Projected maintenance costs include weed management, signage, and parking area and fence maintenance.

∗∗ 11. AESTHETICS/RECREATION **Will the proposed action result in:**	**IMPACT ∗**					
	Unknown	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?		X				
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
c. ∗∗Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report.)		X				
d. ∗∗∗For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c.)		N/A				

The proposed action will increase local recreation opportunities, because the property will be in public ownership and is adjacent to additional public lands (BLM, USFS, and FWP). The proposed action will have no affect on any scenic vista or the viewshed of the area or other aesthetic character, because no major developments will be implemented on this property under FWP ownership and the viewshed will be protected in perpetuity.

12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. **Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?		X				12.a.
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a.)		N/A				

12.a. No destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric, historic, or paleontological importance is anticipated while under FWP ownership. FWP's proposed acquisition will have a positive effect on any cultural or historical resources by securing and managing them in public ownership. By Montana law (22-3-433 MCA), all state agencies are required to consult with the SHPO on the identification and location of heritage properties on lands owned by the state that may be adversely impacted by a proposed action or development project. It is uncertain if unrecorded historic sites would be affected by the activities of an owner other than FWP. There are three old cabins and the framing of an old structure currently on the property. The structures are all in very poor condition and could be a public safety hazard if entered or disturbed. These structures may be demolished after FWP acquires the property due to public safety concerns.

C. SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE **Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:**	**IMPACT ***					
	Unknown	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources that create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				13.b.
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
f. ***For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e.)		N/A				
g. ****For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.		N/A				

13.b. Chemical spraying is part of FWP's weed management plan to limit the infestation of noxious weeds on its properties per the guidance of the FWP *Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan* (June 2008). Weed treatment and storage and mixing of the chemicals will be in accordance with standard operating procedures. Biological agents, mowing, pulling, and/or other methods will be researched and utilized where chemical control is inappropriate. Limitations on motorized use of the property will be implemented to minimize the introduction and spread of noxious weeds. Weed-seed free feeds will be required.

Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:

WMA Management: The existing *Canyon Creek Wildlife Management Area Management Plan* (2002) will be used to manage this property. FWP will document compliance with 7-22-2154, MCA, on weed inspections for land acquisitions. The property will be inspected for noxious weeds by the county weed management district. FWP will implement noxious weed management with guidance from the FWP *Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan* (June 2008) and will utilize properly prescribed chemicals on a prioritized basis. Biological agents, mowing, pulling, and/or other methods will be researched and utilized where chemical control is inappropriate. Limitations on motorized use of the property will be implemented to minimize the introduction and spread of noxious weeds. Weed-seed free feeds will be required.

Historic Sites: By Montana law (22-3-433 MCA), all state agencies are required to consult with the SHPO on the identification and location of heritage properties on lands owned by the state that may be adversely impacted by a proposed action or development project. FWP consulted with SHPO for a cultural resource file search regarding this proposed acquisition in June 2010, and SHPO responded with the following: …*We feel that there is a low likelihood cultural properties will be impacted as a result of this land acquisition. We, therefore, feel that a recommendation for a cultural resource inventory is unwarranted at this time…* (see Appendix C for SHPO's response letter and report).

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

This property is being pursued for acquisition primarily because of the public access opportunities that it will provide into both the Tar Head and Trout Creek drainages. The property will be a good addition to the Canyon Creek WMA and will secure additional habitat for many species, including elk, mule deer, moose, bears, wolves, and wolverine. Acquisition may also enhance FWP's ability to achieve population management objectives of wildlife, by providing hunting access in a strategic location, and may also expedite FWP's efforts to further enhance and extend the current distribution of westslope cutthroat. FWP ownership will secure this public access and habitat in perpetuity. No subdivision or development will occur on the land. Through noxious weed management, habitat quality may improve over time by reducing the quantity and abundance of noxious weeds that currently exist on the property.

PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. Public involvement:

The public will be notified in the following manners to comment on this current EA, the proposed action, and the alternative:

- Two public notices in each of these papers: *Helena Independent Record* and *Bozeman Chronicle*.
- Direct mailing to adjacent landowners and interested parties to ensure their knowledge of the proposed project;
- Public notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: *http://fwp.mt.gov.*

Copies of this EA will be available for public review at the FWP Helena Area Resource Office in Helena and the Regional Headquarters in Bozeman and on the FWP web site.

A public meeting will be held on September 22nd, 2010 at 7 p.m. in the FWP Commission Room at the FWP Headquarters in Helena to provide the public a venue to submit comments and have questions answered by FWP staff. This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope having few limited physical and human impacts.

2. Duration of comment period:

The public comment period will extend for 16 days following the posting of this EA on the FWP website. Written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., , September 28th, 2010 and can be mailed to the address below:

Canyon Creek WMA Addition Project
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Helena Area Resource Office
PO Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620

or email comments to:

jsika@mt.gov

PART V. EA PREPARATION

1. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? (YES/NO)? No
If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action.
An EIS is not required. Based on the assessment above, which has identified a very limited number of minor impacts from the proposed action, an EIS is not required and an environmental assessment is the appropriate level of review.

2. Person(s) responsible for preparing the EA:

Jenny Sika, FWP R3 Wildlife Biologist, Helena, MT
Rebecca Cooper, MEPA Coordinator, Helena, MT
Eric Roberts, FWP R4 Fisheries Biologist, Helena, MT

3. List of agencies or offices consulted during preparation of the EA:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks:
- Design and Construction Bureau, Helena
- Fisheries Bureau, Helena Area Resource Office
- Lands Bureau, Helena
- Legal Bureau, Helena
- Wildlife Bureau, Helena Area Resource Office, Montana State Library, & Bozeman

Montana Natural Heritage Program, Helena MT
Montana State Historic Preservation Office, Helena MT

APPENDICES

A – Predicted Species List

B – FWP *Canyon Creek WMA Addition Fee Title Acquisition Socio-economic Assessment* (2010)

C – SHPO Response Letter and Cultural Resource File Search Report

D – *Canyon Creek WMA Management Plan* (2002) **– Please note: This is a separate document in the electronic version of this EA, *CanyonCrWMA_Add_AppD.pdf*.**

APPENDIX A: PREDICTED SPECIES LIST

Table 1. List of species predicted to be present in the vicinity of the proposed Canyon Creek WMA Addition property. Prepared by Scott Story, FWP.

Common Name	**Scientific Name**
Long-toed Salamander	*Ambystoma macrodactylum*
Rocky Mountain Tailed Frog	*Ascaphus montanus*
Western Toad	*Bufo boreas*
Boreal Chorus Frog	*Pseudacris maculata*
Plains Spadefoot	*Spea bombifrons*
Northern Leopard Frog	*Rana pipiens*
Columbia Spotted Frog	*Rana luteiventris*
Harlequin Duck	*Histrionicus histrionicus*
Turkey Vulture	*Cathartes aura*
Northern Harrier	*Circus cyaneus*
Sharp-shinned Hawk	*Accipiter striatus*
Cooper's Hawk	*Accipiter cooperii*
Red-tailed Hawk	*Buteo jamaicensis*
Rough-legged Hawk	*Buteo lagopus*
Golden Eagle	*Aquila chrysaetos*
American Kestrel	*Falco sparverius*
Merlin	*Falco columbarius*
Peregrine Falcon	*Falco peregrinus*
Gyrfalcon	*Falco rusticolus*
Prairie Falcon	*Falco mexicanus*
Gray Partridge	*Perdix perdix*
Spruce Grouse	*Falcipennis canadensis*
Dusky Grouse	*Dendragapus obscurus*
Ruffed Grouse	*Bonasa umbellus*
Greater Sage-Grouse	*Centrocercus urophasianus*
Sharp-tailed Grouse (Columbian)	*Tympanuchus phasianellus columbianus*
Sharp-tailed Grouse (Plains)	*Tympanuchus phasianellus jamesi*
Wild Turkey	*Meleagris gallopavo*
Mourning Dove	*Zenaida macroura*
Black-billed Cuckoo	*Coccyzus erythropthalmus*
Flammulated Owl	*Otus flammeolus*
Western Screech-Owl	*Megascops kennicottii*
Great Horned Owl	*Bubo virginianus*
Snowy Owl	*Bubo scandiacus*
Northern Pygmy-Owl	*Glaucidium gnoma*
Burrowing Owl	*Athene cunicularia*
Barred Owl	*Strix varia*

Table 1 continued.

Common Name	Scientific Name
Great Gray Owl	*Strix nebulosa*
Long-eared Owl	*Asio otus*
Short-eared Owl	*Asio flammeus*
Boreal Owl	*Aegolius funereus*
Northern Saw-whet Owl	*Aegolius acadicus*
Common Nighthawk	*Chordeiles minor*
Common Poorwill	*Phalaenoptilus nuttallii*
Vaux's Swift	*Chaetura vauxi*
Calliope Hummingbird	*Stellula calliope*
Rufous Hummingbird	*Selasphorus rufus*
Belted Kingfisher	*Megaceryle alcyon*
Lewis's Woodpecker	*Melanerpes lewis*
Williamson's Sapsucker	*Sphyrapicus thyroideus*
Red-naped Sapsucker	*Sphyrapicus nuchalis*
Downy Woodpecker	*Picoides pubescens*
Hairy Woodpecker	*Picoides villosus*
American Three-toed Woodpecker	*Picoides dorsalis*
Northern Flicker	*Colaptes auratus*
Pileated Woodpecker	*Dryocopus pileatus*
Olive-sided Flycatcher	*Contopus cooperi*
Western Wood-Pewee	*Contopus sordidulus*
Willow Flycatcher	*Empidonax traillii*
Hammond's Flycatcher	*Empidonax hammondii*
Dusky Flycatcher	*Empidonax oberholseri*
Cordilleran Flycatcher	*Empidonax occidentalis*
Say's Phoebe	*Sayornis saya*
Western Kingbird	*Tyrannus verticalis*
Eastern Kingbird	*Tyrannus tyrannus*
Tree Swallow	*Tachycineta bicolor*
Violet-green Swallow	*Tachycineta thalassina*
Cliff Swallow	*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*
Barn Swallow	*Hirundo rustica*
Gray Jay	*Perisoreus canadensis*
Steller's Jay	*Cyanocitta stelleri*
Clark's Nutcracker	*Nucifraga columbiana*
Black-billed Magpie	*Pica hudsonia*
American Crow	*Corvus brachyrhynchos*

Table 1 continued.

Common Name	**Scientific Name**
Common Raven	*Corvus corax*
Black-capped Chickadee	*Poecile atricapillus*
Mountain Chickadee	*Poecile gambeli*
Boreal Chickadee	*Poecile hudsonica*
Red-breasted Nuthatch	*Sitta canadensis*
White-breasted Nuthatch	*Sitta carolinensis*
Pygmy Nuthatch	*Sitta pygmaea*
Brown Creeper	*Certhia americana*
House Wren	*Troglodytes aedon*
American Dipper	*Cinclus mexicanus*
Golden-crowned Kinglet	*Regulus satrapa*
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	*Regulus calendula*
Western Bluebird	*Sialia mexicana*
Mountain Bluebird	*Sialia currucoides*
Townsend's Solitaire	*Myadestes townsendi*
Swainson's Thrush	*Catharus ustulatus*
Hermit Thrush	*Catharus guttatus*
American Robin	*Turdus migratorius*
Gray Catbird	*Dumetella carolinensis*
Sage Thrasher	*Oreoscoptes montanus*
Brown Thrasher	*Toxostoma rufum*
Sprague's Pipit	*Anthus spragueii*
Bohemian Waxwing	*Bombycilla garrulus*
Cedar Waxwing	*Bombycilla cedrorum*
Northern Shrike	*Lanius excubitor*
Loggerhead Shrike	*Lanius ludovicianus*
Warbling Vireo	*Vireo gilvus*
Solitary Vireo	*Vireo solitarius*
Orange-crowned Warbler	*Vermivora celata*
Yellow Warbler	*Dendroica petechia*
Yellow-rumped Warbler	*Dendroica coronata*
Townsend's Warbler	*Dendroica townsendi*
American Redstart	*Setophaga ruticilla*
Northern Waterthrush	*Seiurus noveboracensis*
MacGillivray's Warbler	*Oporornis tolmiei*
Common Yellowthroat	*Geothlypis trichas*
Wilson's Warbler	*Wilsonia pusilla*

Table 1 continued.

Common Name	Scientific Name
Western Tanager	*Piranga ludoviciana*
Black-headed Grosbeak	*Pheucticus melanocephalus*
Lazuli Bunting	*Passerina amoena*
Indigo Bunting	*Passerina cyanea*
Green-tailed Towhee	*Pipilo chlorurus*
Spotted Towhee	*Pipilo maculatus*
American Tree Sparrow	*Spizella arborea*
Chipping Sparrow	*Spizella passerina*
Clay-colored Sparrow	*Spizella pallida*
Brewer's Sparrow	*Spizella breweri*
Vesper Sparrow	*Pooecetes gramineus*
Lark Sparrow	*Chondestes grammacus*
Lark Bunting	*Calamospiza melanocorys*
Savannah Sparrow	*Passerculus sandwichensis*
Grasshopper Sparrow	*Ammodramus savannarum*
Fox Sparrow	*Passerella iliaca*
Song Sparrow	*Melospiza melodia*
Lincoln's Sparrow	*Melospiza lincolnii*
White-throated Sparrow	*Zonotrichia albicollis*
Harris's Sparrow	*Zonotrichia querula*
Dark-eyed Junco	*Junco hyemalis*
McCown's Longspur	*Calcarius mccownii*
Lapland Longspur	*Calcarius lapponicus*
Chestnut-collared Longspur	*Calcarius ornatus*
Snow Bunting	*Plectrophenax nivalis*
Bobolink	*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*
Western Meadowlark	*Sturnella neglecta*
Brewer's Blackbird	*Euphagus cyanocephalus*
Brown-headed Cowbird	*Molothrus ater*
Pine Grosbeak	*Pinicola enucleator*
Purple Finch	*Carpodacus purpureus*
Cassin's Finch	*Carpodacus cassinii*
House Finch	*Carpodacus mexicanus*
Red Crossbill	*Loxia curvirostra*
White-winged Crossbill	*Loxia leucoptera*
Common Redpoll	*Carduelis flammea*
Hoary Redpoll	*Carduelis hornemanni*

Table 1 continued.

Common Name	Scientific Name
Pine Siskin	*Carduelis pinus*
American Goldfinch	*Carduelis tristis*
Evening Grosbeak	*Coccothraustes vespertinus*
Masked Shrew	*Sorex cinereus*
Vagrant Shrew	*Sorex vagrans*
Dusky or Montane Shrew	*Sorex monticolus*
Water Shrew	*Sorex palustris*
Little Brown Myotis	*Myotis lucifugus*
Yuma Myotis	*Myotis yumanensis*
Long-eared Myotis	*Myotis evotis*
Fringed Myotis	*Myotis thysanodes*
Long-legged Myotis	*Myotis volans*
California Myotis	*Myotis californicus*
Western Small-footed Myotis	*Myotis ciliolabrum*
Silver-haired Bat	*Lasionycteris noctivagans*
Big Brown Bat	*Eptesicus fuscus*
Hoary Bat	*Lasiurus cinereus*
Townsend's Big-eared Bat	*Corynorhinus townsendii*
Pika	*Ochotona princeps*
Mountain Cottontail	*Sylvilagus nuttallii*
Snowshoe Hare	*Lepus americanus*
White-tailed Jack Rabbit	*Lepus townsendii*
Yellow-pine Chipmunk	*Tamias amoenus*
Red-tailed Chipmunk	*Tamias ruficaudus*
Yellow-bellied Marmot	*Marmota flaviventris*
Richardson's Ground Squirrel	*Spermophilus richardsonii*
Columbian Ground Squirrel	*Spermophilus columbianus*
Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel	*Spermophilus lateralis*
Red Squirrel	*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*
Northern Flying Squirrel	*Glaucomys sabrinus*
Northern Pocket Gopher	*Thomomys talpoides*
Beaver	*Castor canadensis*
Deer Mouse	*Peromyscus maniculatus*
Northern Grasshopper Mouse	*Onychomys leucogaster*
Bushy-tailed Woodrat	*Neotoma cinerea*
Southern Red-backed Vole	*Clethrionomys gapperi*
Heather Vole	*Phenacomys intermedius*
Meadow Vole	*Microtus pennsylvanicus*

Table 1 continued.

Common Name	Scientific Name
Montane Vole	*Microtus montanus*
Long-tailed Vole	*Microtus longicaudus*
Water Vole	*Microtus richardsoni*
Sagebrush Vole	*Lemmiscus curtatus*
Muskrat	*Ondatra zibethicus*
Western Jumping Mouse	*Zapus princeps*
Porcupine	*Erethizon dorsatum*
Coyote	*Canis latrans*
Red Fox	*Vulpes vulpes*
Swift Fox	*Vulpes velox*
Black Bear	*Ursus americanus*
Raccoon	*Procyon lotor*
Marten	*Martes americana*
Fisher	*Martes pennanti*
Short-tailed Weasel	*Mustela erminea*
Least Weasel	*Mustela nivalis*
Long-tailed Weasel	*Mustela frenata*
Mink	*Mustela vison*
Wolverine	*Gulo gulo*
Badger	*Taxidea taxus*
Striped Skunk	*Mephitis mephitis*
Northern River Otter	*Lontra canadensis*
Canada Lynx	*Lynx canadensis*
Bobcat	*Lynx rufus*
Mountain Lion	*Puma concolor*
Elk or Wapiti	*Cervus canadensis*
Mule Deer	*Odocoileus hemionus*
White-tailed Deer	*Odocoileus virginianus*
Moose	*Alces alces*
Pronghorn	*Antilocapra americana*
Painted Turtle	*Chrysemys picta*
Greater Short-horned Lizard	*Phrynosoma hernandesi*
Rubber Boa	*Charina bottae*
Eastern Racer	*Coluber constrictor*
Gophersnake	*Pituophis catenifer*
Terrestrial Gartersnake	*Thamnophis elegans*
Common Gartersnake	*Thamnophis sirtalis*
Prairie Rattlesnake	*Crotalus viridis*

APPENDIX B: FWP *CANYON CREEK WMA ADDITION FEE TITLE ACQUISITION SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT* (2010)

CANYON CREEK
WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA ADDITION

FEE TITLE ACQUISITION

SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT

MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS

Prepared by:
Rob Brooks
July 2010

I. INTRODUCTION

House Bill 526, passed by the 1987 Legislature (MCA 87-1-241 and MCA 87-1-242), authorizes Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MFWP) to acquire an interest in land for the purpose of protecting and improving wildlife habitat. These acquisitions can be through fee title, conservation easements, or leasing. In 1989, the Montana legislature passed House Bill 720 requiring that a socioeconomic assessment be completed when wildlife habitat is acquired using Habitat Montana monies. These assessments evaluate the significant social and economic impacts of the purchase on local governments, employment, schools, and impacts on local businesses.

This socioeconomic evaluation addresses the fee title purchase of property presently owned by the Ball family. The report addresses the physical and institutional setting as well as the social and economic impacts associated with the proposed fee title acquisition.

II. PHYSICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL SETTING

A. Property Description

The Ball Property is located near Canyon Creek, MT in Lewis and Clark County about 20 miles from Helena, MT. The property that MFWP would acquire encompasses approximately 151 acres. A detailed description of this property is included in the environmental assessment (EA).

B. Habitat and Wildlife Populations

Vegetation consists of timber, native grasslands and riparian areas. Elk, deer, and black bears utilize the land as well as a host of other species. In addition, a number of species of concern such as grizzly bears, Canada lynx, and wolverine use the property for movement from one area to another.

C. Current Use

The Ball property is predominately timber land and has been logged as recently as the 1980's.

D. Management Alternatives

A) No purchase
B) MFWP Fee Title purchase the property fee title

Alternative B, the fee title purchase will provide long-term protection of the native habitats and wildlife this land sustains and will provide additional public access opportunities to the existing Canyon Creek WMA, adjacent Bureau of Land Management lands and Forest Service lands.

No Purchase Alternative

This alternative requires some assumptions since use and management of the property will vary depending on what the current owners decide to do with the property if this transaction does not happen. The economic impacts associated with this alternative have not been calculated.

III. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Section II identified the management alternatives this report addresses. The fee title purchase will provide long term protection of important wildlife habitat, and provide for public access. Section III quantifies the social and economic consequences of the two management alternatives following two basic accounting stances: financial and local area impacts.

Financial impacts address the cost of the fee title transfer to MFWP and discuss the impacts on tax revenues to local government agencies including school districts.

Expenditure data associated with the use of the property provides information for analyzing the impacts these expenditures may have on local businesses (i.e. income and employment).

Financial Impacts

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks will use monies from the Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Trust to purchase the Ball property fee title. The purchase price is $635,000.00.

MCA 87-1-209 and 23-1-127 require that FWP establish an account to ensure that maintenance activities including weed control, fence maintenance, etc. are funded. This maintenance account is capped at 20% of the purchase price or $300,000, whichever is less. In the case of the Ball property acquisition the account will be $127,000.

The financial impacts to local governments are the potential changes in tax revenues resulting from the fee title purchase. The fee title purchase of the Ball property by MFWP will not change the tax revenues that Lewis and Clark County currently collects on this land. MFWP is required by Montana Code 87-1-603 to pay “to the county a sum equal to the amount of taxes which would be payable on county assessment of the property were it taxable to a private citizen.” The taxes on this land were approximately $950.00 in 2009.

B. Economic Impacts

The fee title purchase will improve recreational opportunities which will have a neutral to positive impact to local businesses.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The fee title purchase by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks will provide long term protection for wildlife habitat and habitat connectivity, maintain the open space integrity of the land, ensure public recreation opportunities and provide for improved access to Forest Service lands that border Bureau of Land Management lands adjacent to this property.

The fee title purchase and title transfer to MFWP will not cause a reduction in tax revenues on this property from their current levels to Lewis and Clark County under Montana Code 87-1-603.

The financial impacts of the fee title purchase on local businesses will be neutral to positive in both the short and long run.

APPENDIX C: SHPO RESPONSE LETTER AND CULTURAL RESOURCE FILE SEARCH REPORT

Big Sky. Big Land. Big History.
Montana Historical Society

Historic Preservation
Museum
Outreach & Interpretation
Publications
Research Center

June 29, 2010

Jenny Sika
FWP
PO Box 200701
Helena MT 59620

RE: CANYON CREEK WMA ACQUISITION. SHPO Project #: 2010062902

Dear Jenny:

I have conducted a cultural resource file search for the above-cited project located in Section 3, T13N R6. According to our records there has been one previously recorded site within the designated search locale. Site 24LC1187 is the Stemple-Gould Historic Mining District. In addition to the site there has been one previously conducted cultural resource inventory done in the area. I've attached a list of the report. If you would like any further information regarding the site or report you may contact me at the number listed below.

We feel that there is a low likelihood cultural properties will be impacted as a result of this land acquisition. We, therefore, feel that a recommendation for a cultural resource inventory is unwarranted at this time. However, should ground disturbing activities take place for a new approach/drive we would ask that a cultural resource inventory be conducted in order to determine whether or not sites exist and if they will be impacted.

If you have any further questions or comments you may contact me at (406) 444-7767 or by e-mail at dmurdo@mt.gov. Thank you for consulting with us.

Sincerely,

Damon Murdo
Cultural Records Manager
State Historic Preservation Office

File: FWP/WILDLIFE/2010

225 North Roberts Street
P.O. Box 201201
Helena, MT 59620-1201
(406) 444-2694
(406) 444-2696 FAX
montanahistoricalsociety.org

State Historic Preservation Office

Cultural Resource Annotated Bibliography System
CRABS Section Report

July 06, 2010

Township:13N Range:06W Section:3 CRIS Report

PASSMANN DORI

12/ 9/ 1997 MILL CREEK PROPERTY LAND EXCHANGE

CRABS Document Number: LC 6 19794 Agency Document No:

APPENDIX D: *CANYON CREEK WMA MANAGEMENT PLAN* (2002**)**

Please note that this is a separate document in the electronic version of this EA: *CanyonCrWMA_Add_AppD.pdf*.